755 753 Thus, the cures prescribed consist of some kind of medicine (herbs, stones, etc.) whose choice is determined by analogy with the disease--dog's hair against rabies, for instance--and magic words or phrases aiming simply at exorcism or at the transfer of the disease to another person.

851 As with other cultures, the chief events of life--birth, maturity, marriage and death--are surrounded by a host of customs and superstitions. The newborn child is baptized as soon as possible to prevent its being exchanged by some evil force. Before baptism, the child is not to be called by his name but is referred to in general terms such as "the little one," in order to prevent the forces of dark from identifying him.

884 In the life of the young men the maturity ceremony, at which they are accepted as full members of society around the age of 17 years, is very important. As late as the middle of the last century, these elaborate ceremonies were still generally observed. Today they seem to have lost their importance but, in a simplified form, they still welcome almost every young man to maturity. The maturity ceremony consists of a feast at the village inn at which the young man is

pagan fires, and with them begging the help of the Prince of Darkness . . . 754

But it is much better if the child is born without teeth and without such great knowledge, because what good is it to the poor mother if her dear child suddenly disappears into the air ! . . . She did not give birth to him amidst frightful pain in order that, instead of working with spades and hoes, he should fly about in the clouds, fight up there and perhaps send hail on the seeds to the despair of their poor Hungarian owners . . . 000

Rather let him become a normal child, go to school, be a scholar, a strippling, a youth, a lad, and what a lad ! Let him be called up as a soldier, eat soldier's bread for a time, be discharged and then, when the time has come, look round for a wife ; let him get engaged, married, have children, get a bent back and prepare for death : then his horse shall stop, put down its load, finish, give back the key, and he shall move to the bosom of Abraham, like any ordinary mortal . . . That is the fate of man, not to become a wizard . . .

The little heathen[1] must be taken to the priest, that his godmother may come back with the news : «Out we took a heathen, back we brought a Christian» ; or «We fetched a wolf, we returned a lamb . . .» 851

The little Palóc is carried off ; his mother lies hidden from the world in a *tent-like couch*, that is to say her bed is surrounded by embroidered sheets, as though in her condition — in the manner of the primitive people — she has to be separated from the other members of her family . . . While the family is away with the newborn, it is wise to put an axe, a drill or some other useful implement into the mother's bed, so that the boy shall become a good worker. If it be a girl, then it has to be a spindle, or a distaff so that she shall become a good spinner. But before the babe is [846]

[1] [i.e: the newly born baby -- Analyst]

851 taken away, it is advisable to tie a little red ribbon, or at least a string to his ankel, so that no one shall cast a spell on him; and no one must say that he is a beautiful child, because even that counts as a spell.

846 In the Palóc country the women must not go outside their yard for a whole month after their child's birth, and even if they step out of the house they must wrap themselves in white linen, and look neither to the right nor to the left . . .

846 608 The mother has little work to do during these four weeks, as her women relatives provide her with everything during that period . . . Foremost and for the longest time of all, the godmother of the child. This is what the godmother has to provide on the last day of the obligatory four weeks : 1. beef broth, 2. stuffed chicken, 3. four cakes, each one two feet three inches long and just under two feet wide — or to put it simply, as big as a millstone ! 4. 16 to 18 cracknels, each having a diameter of two inches and a half; five plates of sweets, and to each plate a bottle of wine. This sending of food, which is usually called «friends' basket» or something of the kind, is done with the best possible taste and tidiness. The godmother dresses up in her Sunday clothes, her plates and dish clothes are resplendant with cleanliness, — that is how she goes to the mother who is laid up.

851 In some places the baptism feast is on the day on which the christening took place, in others it is three or four days, occasionally even three or four weeks later, that is once the worst days are over and the mother can also be up and take part in the entertaining. At a strict baptism only the women may take part, but often the men of the household are also allowed in. In some places there is a christening dinner, in others a supper. Amongst the Matyós, even in the poorest house, there are at least five or six courses, in well-to-do

851 families more. This is the menu of a christening feast : beef
[262] soup, boiled meat, cabbage with pork, chicken soup with noodles, a milk pap with butter or honey, or sprinkled with sugar ; «paprika» chicken, fried sweets and naturally wine. In many places each guest contributes something to the christening feast : the godmother especially is literally weighed down by the amount of sweets she provides. She gives five or six cakes the size of a mill-stone, as we described them above, four round cakes, six poppy, four cheese and four plum cakes, other poppy cakes and one bottle of wine. All this is heavy enough for one weak woman . . .

At the end of supper the child is put on the table for a little while in beautifully clean swaddles and then everyone gives something for the babe ; if it is a boy, this is called «spur money», if it is a girl, «skirt money».

608 But the godmother has not finished her duties when she has carried her heavy load to the christening supper : she has still to produce her godmother present. In many places this may be done within a year after the birth. Amongst the Palóc this is a girl's due : — a red Cashmir kerchief, a linen skirt, a frilled linen shirt, with its shoulder and front beautifully embroidered, (the godmother has to embroider it herself) silk ribbons for shirts. This is for the boy : — a frilled, embroidered linen shirt, a waist coat with innumerable buttons, a round hat with ribbons. This is the boy's first outfit when he begins to walk.

851 A few weeks after the christening feast the Palóc and the Matyó women go to be «churched». The young mother puts on her best clothes, takes the babe on her arm, covers the child with ten to fifteen coloured kerchiefs, — this is also the custom at the baptism, — and goes to be «churched», thanking Got that «He blessed her house with such joy».

774 It is wise to hurry with the baptism, because so long as the babe is unchristened the devil easily gets hold of it,